

Prioritization Results

Solid Waste Laws Update Process for W2RAC, Sept 6, 2011

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Introduction

Some of you have been involved in the Solid Waste Laws Update Process. Working with staff and stakeholders, we identified 11 themes and 79 subthemes of problems with solid waste laws (available at <http://www.ecy.wa.gov/biblio/1107018.html>). We recently surveyed stakeholders and staff to help us prioritize which problems to start working on, as the entire list was too long. The survey was completed by 79 stakeholders and 36 staff.

Based on the survey results, the Solid Waste Laws Update Team will be focusing on 25 subthemes from 7 of the 11 themes as we move into the Solutions Phase. These are in Table 1. In most cases, these were selected based on priorities for both stakeholders and staff. Of the 25 selected subthemes, 16 were shared priorities between staff and external stakeholders. The majority of the other subthemes were definitions felt to be important by external stakeholders.

Not all subthemes from the seven priority themes were selected as priorities. Furthermore, four entire themes, and all their subthemes, were not selected as priorities. These are listed in Table 2. The Solid Waste Laws Update Team will not be focusing on these issues at this time, even though a few subthemes ranked high with staff or stakeholders separately. Reasons for this decision include:

- We need to reduce the list of issues to work on
- Some issues are not best addressed by statute
- Others in our agency are working on some of these issues

While we prioritized the following list, we recognize the interconnectedness of many of the subthemes, and as opportunities allow, may address some subthemes that were deferred.

Finally, while the team will be moving to the solutions phase with these 25 subthemes, we may not be able to address all of these issues. We will likely need to further reduce this list due to work load and staffing limitations.

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Table 1. Selected priority themes and subthemes

Priority Subthemes for the Solutions Phase
Financing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Solid waste management priorities conflict with solid waste system financing • Local government has responsibility for solid waste management but often lacks sufficient financial resources • Local governments rely on grants to provide waste reduction, recycling and enforcement programs • Recycling is perceived to be free or that it should pay for itself
Enforcement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local enforcement of solid waste regulation is inconsistent • Exempt facilities criteria and oversight is inconsistent across the state • Enforcement funding is limited • What's a waste, what's a product? • Enforcement authority in the law is lacking • Ecology and other agencies' laws are not always coordinated
Public Awareness & Education <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need expansion of public awareness of waste reduction and recycling
Waste Reduction <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Waste reduction design and incentives are not adequately emphasized. • Packaging provides challenges to reducing waste.
Packaging & Products <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Packaging is often excessive and wasteful • Lack of extended producer responsibility
Definitions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Solid Waste • Waste vs. Product • Waste-to-Energy • General issues with definitions • Recycle, Recycling, Recyclables & Recycled Products • Recycling facilities • Diversion • Incidental contamination • Interagency definitions are inconsistent
Roles & Responsibilities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roles need to be defined and clarified between stakeholders, especially between Ecology and local governments

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Table 2. Deferred themes and subthemes

Deferred Subthemes and Themes (<u>Not</u> a priority)	
Financing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Taxes on solid waste disposal fund other programs Landfill fees vary throughout the state incentivizing transport of wastes to the lowest cost landfill Financing for private innovation is limited Solid waste permit fees do not cover all permitting cost Product stewardship programs are not used sufficiently to fund recycling programs Funding sources for solid waste management infrastructure are inadequate Solid waste system costs are not properly allocated or evaluated
Enforcement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Beneficial use provisions are not clear or effective Conflicts of interest exist between local government departments Sham recycling occurs Waste disposal on private land is difficult to address
Public Awareness & Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Education is costly and hard to measure Public messaging is inconsistent and difficult to distribute Hotline mandate is outdated Building contractor education is needed
Waste Reduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Waste reduction is hard to measure Insufficient attention and resources are devoted to waste reduction Waste reduction and the economy are in conflict The role of local or state government in waste reduction and is unclear and ineffective
Packaging & Products	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There are no environmental performance standards for packaging or products in Washington Purchasing environmentally preferred products is difficult Recycling of products and packaging is confusing and not incentivized Planned obsolescence leads to more disposable products Lack of an integrated product stewardship approach International commerce limits the ability to make change Existing product legislation is poorly organized and inconsistent
Definitions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reuse Waste reduction Composting Vactor waste use
Measurement (Entire theme and all subthemes)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Measurement of the recycling rate is inadequate Performance measures for waste reduction are insufficient

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<i>Deferred Subthemes and Themes (<u>Not</u> a priority)</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ <i>Greenhouse gas emissions are not connected sufficiently to waste management</i>▪ <i>Life-Cycle Analysis measurement is not used</i>▪ <i>There is no measurement of the public value of recycling</i>▪ <i>Additional measurements need to be considered</i>
<i>Infrastructure & Materials Management</i> (Entire theme and all subthemes) <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ <i>Markets and manufacturing capacity is inadequate</i>▪ <i>Information about materials markets is hard to find</i>▪ <i>Organic material processing capacity is insufficient</i>▪ <i>Rural areas are lacking recycling infrastructure</i>▪ <i>Infrastructure funding, siting and oversight is challenging</i>▪ <i>Competition for feedstock inhibits innovative recycling</i>▪ <i>Defining recyclables in local plans is restrictive</i>▪ <i>Training for facility operations and enforcement is burdensome and outdated</i>▪ <i>Collection infrastructure is inconsistent and confusing</i>
<i>Government Walk the Talk</i> (Entire theme and all subthemes) <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ <i>Environmentally Preferred Purchasing is hard to implement</i>▪ <i>Environmentally Preferred Purchasing is hard to measure and enforce</i>▪ <i>Education and awareness about Environmentally Preferred Purchasing is lacking</i>▪ <i>Purchasing policies can conflict with Environmentally Preferred Purchasing</i>▪ <i>Environmentally Preferred Purchasing can be costly and lacks incentives</i>
<i>Toxics</i> (Entire theme and all subthemes) <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ <i>Moderate risk waste collection programs are limited</i>▪ <i>There are toxics in products and sufficient protections are not in place</i>▪ <i>There is no integrated chemical policy in Washington State</i>▪ <i>Designation and management of certain hazardous wastes is confusing and can inhibit reuse</i>

What's Next and the Solutions Phase

The Solid Waste Laws Update Team received approval from W2R PMT on our prioritizations of problem subthemes to address. We have also shared these results with the Hazardous Waste Program Managers. We are preparing a report to send to the [Solid Waste Laws Update listserv](#). (If you have signed up for our listserv, you will be receiving that message.)

We will then start the Solutions Phase of this project: We will begin by soliciting ideas for solutions to the selected subthemes from staff and external stakeholders. Ideas for solutions will be solicited and shared electronically. We will include solution suggestions already received in the Problems Phase. We do not anticipate more public meetings until later in this process (Spring or Summer 2012).

For more information on the prioritization process and our decisions, please contact Janine Bogar.

E-mail: janine.bogar@ecy.wa.gov; Phone: 360-407-6654